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TAGS: NATO, MARR, MOPS, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH CRITICIZE PRESSLER ARTICLE:

1. AN EXAMPLE OF THE ATTITUDE WHICH CAUSES TEETH TO GRIND IN WHITEHALL IS THE FOLLOWING PIECE BY SENATOR LARRY PRESSLER FROM THE JUNE 24 SUNDAY TIMES. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE CITED IT AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LINE LEAST CALCULATED TO WORK WITH EUROPEANS.

2. TEXT FOLLOWS:

LAST WEDNESDAY THE US SENATE VOTED FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER ON AN AMENDMENT THAT COULD HAVE LED TO AMERICAN TROOP CUTS IN EUROPE. I CO-SPONSORED THIS MEASURE WHICH WAS DEFEATED ONLY AFTER STRONG PRESIDENTIAL LOBBYING. VICE-PRESIDENT BUSH PRESIDED OVER THE SENATE IN THE EVENT OF A TIE VOTE, ILLUSTRATING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS CHALLENGE.

THE AMENDMENT REFLECTED A GROWING SENTIMENT THAT OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES FEEL EXEMPT FROM RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COMMON DEFENCE. NATO WILL NOT HAVE MUCH OF A FUTURE UNLESS EUROPE DEMONSTRATES A WILLINGNESS TO SHARE FULLY IN THE COSTS AND RISKS OF SECURITY. HERE IS THE BACKGROUND TO LAST WEEK'S VOTE.

IN 1949, THE US CORRECTLY ASSUMED THE MAJOR BURDEN FOR WESTERN SECURITY. WESTERN EUROPE'S ECONOMIES WERE IN A SHAMBLES AND THE SOVIET UNION WAS EMPIRE-BUILDING IN EASTERN EUROPE. THE ALLIED ECONOMIES HAVE SINCE COME TO CHALLENGE THE US IN BOTH WORLD AND AMERICAN MARKETS. EUROPE ALSO HAS A STRONG DEFENCE INDUSTRY PROVIDING ARMS TO THE WORLD'S NATIONS.

UNFORTUNATELY, NATO HAS NOT CHANGED TO REFLECT THIS REALITY. THE US SHOULDERS MUCH OF THE DEFENCE BURDEN FOR EUROPE - TOO MUCH, I WOULD SAY. OUR PARTNERS EXPECT US TO DEFEND THE CONTINENT WHILE THEY PROTECT THEIR WELFARE SYSTEMS.

THE INEQUITIES ARE NOT NEW. WHAT IS NEW IS THE RISE OF A FRESH GENERATION OF YOUNG LEADERS IN THE US SENATE WHO JUDGE NATO'S VIABILITY BY A RATIONAL RATHER THAN EMOTIONAL STANDARD. THE LEADERS WHO PERSONALLY SERVED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR ARE RAPIDLY BEING REPLACED BY VIETNAM VETERANS SUCH AS MYSELF WHO ARE ORIENTED TO ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISSUES. THE NEW GENERATION BELIEVES THAT COMMON DEFENCE CAN WORK ONLY THROUGH SUSTAIN COMMON EFFORT. THE NEW RATIONALITY IS REINFORCED BY AMERICA'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK IN WHICH ASIA HAS REPLACED EUROPE AS OUR PRINCIPLE TRADING AREA.

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MUCH PRAISE AND MANY PROMISES EMERGE EACH YEAR FROM NATO MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. BUT SPEECH MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. BUT SPEECHES IN SUPPORT OF COMMON DEFENCE ARE NO LONGER GOOD ENOUGH. WE EXPECT DEEDS. BUT THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE WITH NATO BURDEN-SHARING IS NOT A SOURCE OF HOPE.

IN 1977 THE NATO ALLIES MADE A COMMITMENT TO INCREASE DEFENCE SPENDING BY 3 PERCENT ABOVE INFLATION ANNUALLY. FEW OF THE ALLIES ARE MEETING THIS GOAL. BRITAIN IS A NOTABLE EXCEPTION, BUT BUDGET PROJECTIONS SHOW THAT EVEN BRITAIN WILL FAIL TO MEET THE GOAL DURING THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

THE TREND LINE IS TROUBLING. IN 1982, THE ALLIES ACHIEVED AN INCREASE OF 2.3 PERCENT; IN 1983, IT DROPPED TO ABOUT 2 PERCENT. IN CONTRAST, THE US ACHIEVED AN ANNUAL RATE OF INCREASE OF 7.6 PERCENT IN THE SAME PERIOD.

IN MY VIEW, THE DEFENCE OF EUROPE IS PRINCIPALLY AN ISSUE OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE. WE HAVE A DUTY TO HELP OUR ALLIES, FOR A SECURE EUROPE SERVES OUR COMMON INTERESTS. BUT THIS SHOULD NOT MEAN AN AMERICAN GUARANTEE TO TAKE UP THE SLACK WHENEVER EUROPE IS UNWILLING TO MAKE THE REQUIRED SACRIFICE.

THE ALLIES WORRY ABOUT BIG US BUDGET DEFICITS THAT SLOW GLOBAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, BUT A MAJOR SOURCE OF THESE DEFICITS IS OUR LARGE DEFENCE BUDGET. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT MORE THAN 60 PERCENT OF US DEFENCE SPENDING BENEFITS NATO. AT THE SAME TIME, TO REDUCE OUR BALLOONING EXPENDITURES, WE HAVE CUT SOCIAL PROGRAMMES. EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL ACTION BY OUR ALLIES ARE HARD TO FIND.

(MORE) USIS LONDON
END OF MESSAGE

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